News Release

Writer, Environmentalist Taylor Brorby to Profile North Dakota Oil Boom in Earth Month Kickoff Presentation April 1, 2014, at the U of M Crookston; Presentation Begins at 6

*By ltollefs on Wednesday, March 26, 2014*Writer and environmentalist Taylor Brorby (at right) will speak on the impact of the North Dakota oil boom at 6:30 p.m. in Bede Ballroom on the University of Minnesota campus on Tuesday, April 1, 2014. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Much has been reported in the media and coffee shop conversations about the Oil Boom in the Bakken Formation of western North Dakota. America needs the oil to support an energy consumptive lifestyle, but there are downsides to an "oil rush." The social, economic, and environmental impacts on the people and land are the focus of Taylor Brorby's writing and in presenting his version of the story.

Brorby is currently a writer in residence at Holden Village, a retreat center in central Washington State. He grew up in North Dakota and has gone back to his home state to witness and write about what he sees as the environmental and social tragedy that is the Bakken Oil Fields. He has interviewed dozens of residents, and has taken over a thousand photos and video of the environmental and social impacts to the area. Brorby has a B.A. in English from St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn., and an M.A. in liberal studies from Hamline University in St. Paul, Minn.

Taylor reports, "Throughout my travels I have smelled sulfur and gas in wheat fields, seen the night sky glow orange from flaring, watched thousands of semis hauling water to and oil from well sites, and have had dozens of conversations with native North Dakotans and residents who work in the oil fields."

Most of the Bakken Project uses "fracking" (slang for hydraulic fracturing) of the deep underlying deposits to release a mix of crude oil and natural gas. Developed in 1947, fracking is a method used to increase the production of a well by using a mixture of proppant (usually frac sand), water, and chemicals. The mixture is injected into a well under very high pressures. Small cracks form in the bedrock, frac sand "props" open the fissures, and conduits form to allow the flow of fluids and gas within a well. The average depth of a hydraulically fractured oil/gas well is between 6000-9000 feet below the surface with some drilling conducting horizontally. More than 40 percent of the natural gas and 30 percent of the oil being produced in the U.S. today is produced via fracking, with numbers expected to climb past 60 percent by 2020.

The event is co-sponsored by the Crookston Students for Sustainable Development, the Center for Sustainability, Concordia College-Moorhead, and the Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership. For more information contact: Dan Svedarsky at 218-281-8129 or dsvedars@crk.umn.edu.

Today the University of Minnesota, Crookston delivers 29 bachelor's degree programs, 20 minors, and 36 concentrations on campus--as well as 13 degrees online--in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,800 undergraduates from more than 20 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu.

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